



March 18, 2019

Ms. Marlene Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20056

**Re: Ex Parte of Hughes Network Systems, LLC on Hurricane Michael Preparation and Response, PN 18-339**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Hughes Network Systems, LLC (“Hughes”) submits this ex parte in response to the above referenced public notice on preparing a response of communications providers to Hurricane Michael. Hughes is the largest global provider of satellite broadband services with approximately 1.3 million subscribers across the Americas; offering consumers throughout the United States broadband satellite services at speeds of 25/3 Mbps.

Because of the nature of satellite services, the Hughes satellite system has been instrumental in providing broadband services to areas impacted by natural and man-made disasters, even when terrestrial infrastructure is not available. Hurricane Michael was no different. Hughes makes these comments to provide information on its performance and its role supporting the Federal Emergency Management Administration (“FEMA”) in its efforts to support the residents of the affected areas during this crisis as well as providing broadband service directly to users in the affected areas.

The devastation caused by Hurricane Michael in Florida and Georgia was horrible. Hughes’ geostationary orbit satellite system and its ground infrastructure were not impacted by the storm. Accordingly, Hughes’ customers in the affected area were able to receive their broadband satellite services except during the height of the storm. The power and portability of satellite should be a requirement in any communication network. Be it a natural disaster or a manmade event, satellite plays a critical role in the recovery and reestablishment of the communication network. Recent examples of benefits of satellite can be found in the horrible events in Puerto Rico and Hurricane Michael. Because satellite is not tied to the terrestrial networks subject to storm damage, it was the primary technology used to establish mission critical communications in areas of high impact, allowing first responders to transfer data and coordinate rescue and recovery efforts.

Hughes, because of its long-standing relationship with FEMA worked with FEMA to provide satellite broadband services, including VoIP, to seven of FEMA’s Disaster Recovery Centers located in the areas affected within Holmes, Jackson, Laurens, Liberty, and Seminole Counties. FEMA’s Disaster Recovery Centers, among other things, provide important communications services to people in areas affected by the storms, including the ability to file claim forms and contact relatives.<sup>1</sup> These services were critical to the recovery effort especially to residents whom would have no other form of communications.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/disaster-recovery-centers>



In addition to FEMA and other first responder groups, local communities employed satellite services, including Hughes broadband satellite service, to provide much needed communications, commerce, and data transmission services. Using satellite, local hot spots were creating giving communities the ability to communication with love ones outside the impacted areas.

Satellite was also deployed to enable transactions of critical supplies. With banking services impacted, secure data transfer over satellite enabled retailers to process credit card transactions, hence keeping local economies active and thriving. Satellite plays a key role in accelerating the recovery efforts by providing an immediate data link, allowing for the submission of damage claims and resource requests by insurance industry.

To this end, Hughes provided emergency communications services using approximately 45 broadband satellite VSATs to a variety of government offices, religious establishments, not-for-profits, first responders including health and fire departments, and others in the affected areas. In addition, during the period of October 7<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>, we had 159 new activations for users across eight counties.

Accordingly, Hughes was able to continue its services to its subscribers during the Hurricane Michael recovery effort and also played an important role, working with its federal partner, FEMA, to help residents communicate with the outside world in order to move forward with recovery, including contacting loved ones. These services were available even when the terrestrial infrastructure was not available. This demonstrates, as was seen during the 2017 Hurricane Season, the important role of satellite services in providing communications during disaster responses and recovery.

We look forward to discussing with you further Hughes' response to Hurricane Michael and the role of satellite in disaster response and recovery.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer A. Manner  
Senior Vice President, Hughes Network Systems, LLC  
301-428-5893  
[Jennifer.manner@echostar.com](mailto:Jennifer.manner@echostar.com)

cc: Jeffery Goldthorp